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Fantastic Saga Of The CIA

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It is a tradition of the US military services that men in uniform hold themselves aloof from domestic politics. Military leaders understand their job to be the defense of the United States.

Vice Adm. William F. Raborn was a career Navy officer. When President Johnson made him director of the CIA he took to that post a natural disposition to view the functions of the CIA as essentially military. One can well imagine his reaction upon finding file after file and case after case in which the CIA was secretly investing staggering sums of money in individuals, institutions and organizations which were openly hostile to US policy, foreign and domestic.

The headquarters records showed, for example, that the CIA secretly financed a students' organization which publicly and violently opposed the Vietnam war and the draft; one suspects that Admiral Raborn had some rather salty comments to make when he found the officer who ran that operation.

And the admiral doubtless was taken aback when he learned for the first time that many of the books on foreign policy which he had been reading were actually financed by the CIA. One New York book publisher calmly admitted that his firm, alone, had published more than a dozen such books. It seems probable that he was visibly shaken to learn that a "former" CIA person headed a study of US foreign policy in the Far East under contract to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Just how "former" the man really was not even the Senate Committee ever determined.

But surely the real explosion came when the admiral learned that almost a million CIA dollars had gone to an outfit in which the perennial Socialist candidate for president, Norman Thomas, was a leader, and that a prominent beneficiary of the funds was Juan Bosch. This was the same pro-Communist Juan Bosch who had moved to take over the Dominican Republic. President Johnson had found it necessary

to send in the Marines. The spectacle of the CIA secretly supporting Bosch, while Marines died to head him off, certainly was too much.

Admiral Raborn didn't use a broom. He put a task force to work swabbing the decks. People who loved CIA money but loved criticizing the US too, were scrubbed out, and their expensive projects with them. The howls were loud, long and frosty. The sunshine patriots forgot their oaths of secrecy, forgot all concern for security, forgot all consideration for the safety of valuable undercover CIA agents, who might be arrested, assassinated or exposed by their wounded pocketbook-patriotism. And irresponsible newspapers and magazines reeled off all the CIA scandals they could induce the vain, scorned "gliberals" to reveal.

The best evidence that the CIA housecleaning administered by Admiral Raborn was necessary is the cacophony of attacks on the CIA by the dismissed payrollers. It is important to note, also, that almost all of the ill-advised and ill-fated projects which he cancelled, and which we have been reading about, had their beginnings a dozen or more years ago. Certainly not all of the bleats have yet been heard. More and more security breaches must be expected as terminated turncoats tattle all they can tell. Some will be sensational. But for the most part they will be the last gasp of the discharged "Frank Wisner" teams, recruited by that long-time head of the operational arm of the CIA.

It should be mentioned in passing that in England, for example, these babbling soreheads would be put into jail under the Official Secrets Act. In our country, they bask in the warming glow of liberal-left publicity.

Admiral Raborn put an end to the Wisner era. Wisner himself is dead. His job done, Admiral Raborn resigned. He was succeeded by a career CIA man, Richard Helms, who knows where the remaining skeletons are secreted.

Leaders of both political parties are firmly committed to the proposition that the CIA must never again be permitted to interfere in domestic matters, financing ad hoc committees, influencing press and political affairs, etc. In the days ahead there will be further reorganization. It seems probable that the very name CIA will be dropped and that there will be a new agency. One hopes that it will come to serve the country with distinction. The chartered responsibilities of the agency are such as to make it perhaps our most important single peace-time agency. There are many loyal men — indeed, unheralded heroes — in the service of the CIA in many foreign lands. It is the nature of their jobs that we cannot know their names, or their accomplishments.

The important fact is that the incredible clique which ran the operational arm of the CIA for so many years with a brazen contempt for the Congress — and sometimes even for the White House — has been broken up and pried from a position of power.

And none too soon.

—Farmington, Conn.
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